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FILED

FEB 13 2001

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO  
WESTERN DIVISION

KENNETH J. MURPHY, Clerk  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

ELSA SKINNER-MORGAN, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. C-1-00-424

Judge Herman J. Weber

**SKINNER WORK GROUP MEMORANDUM  
IN SUPPORT OF UNITED STATES' MOTION  
TO ENTER CONSENT DECREES**

On January 17, 2001, the United States filed a motion seeking entry of the two consent decrees it previously lodged with the Court to resolve the United States' claims against all the defendants in this matter, who include all the plaintiffs, as well as most of the defendants, in the private cost recovery action before the Court in The Dow Chemical Company, et al. v. Acme Wrecking Co., et al., C-1-97-307 ("Acme Wrecking"). Those defendants who would perform the remaining remedial action at the Skinner Landfill (the "Site") under the Remedial Action Consent Decree, the ("Work Group")<sup>1</sup> submit this brief memorandum in support of the motion for entry filed by the United States. For the reasons set forth in the Memorandum in Support of the United States' Motion to Enter Consent Decrees ("U.S. Memorandum") and below, the Work

<sup>1</sup> The "Work Group" consists of Anchor Hocking Corporation (Newell Rubbermaid, Inc.); Chemical Leaman Tank Lines; The Dow Chemical Company; Ford Motor Company; Formica Corporation; GE Aircraft Engines; General Motors Corporation; Henkel Corporation (on behalf of Cognis, successor to Henkel, on behalf of Emery Division of Quantum Chemical Corporation f/k/a National Distillers & Chemical Corporation, a predecessor to Henkel); King Container Services, Inc. King Wrecking Co., Inc.; Monsanto Company; OXY USA Inc.; and Velsicol Chemical Corporation.

Group concurs that both decrees should be entered by the Court and respectfully requests that the Court do so expeditiously so that construction of the remedy can be completed this year prior to the onset of winter weather conditions near the end of 2001.

**I. THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS AND RESULTS ARE FAIR, REASONABLE, AND CONSISTENT WITH THE PURPOSES OF CERCLA**

As the United States describes in some detail, both the process of reaching the settlements in this case and the settlements themselves are fair, reasonable, and consistent with the purposes of CERCLA. U.S. Memorandum at 22-32. In its Memorandum, the United States notes, among other things, that although it is unaware of the precise amounts being paid by the Work Group to finance and perform the remedial action required under the Remedial Action decree, the United States understands that “those amounts were based, in part, on the allocations of responsibility determined by the allocator during the ADR process.” *Id.* at 27.

In fact, all the settlements in both this matter and in the private cost recovery action have been predicated on the results of the alternative dispute resolution (“ADR”) process mandated by the Court in its Case Management Order in Acme Wrecking. That order required the parties, upon issuance of the Allocator’s Final Non-Binding Allocation Report and Recommendations (“Allocator’s Report”), to engage in intensive negotiations. Case Management Order, ¶ 18a. Consistent with the Order, a meeting was convened shortly after issuance of the Allocator’s Report of all those parties whose alleged shares of responsibility at the Site, based on the Allocator’s findings, were deemed to be more than “de minimis.” All parties in that category, including all current nonsettlers<sup>2</sup> in the private cost recovery action who fall within the category and have not settled with the United States either, were invited to participate in both that and a number of subsequent meetings and conference calls in which the shares of these parties for the claims of both the United States and the cost recovery plaintiffs were negotiated at length based upon the Allocator’s Report. These negotiations were intensive and conducted at arms length by experienced outside counsel for the purpose of forming the group of parties who, while denying liability, ultimately made a good faith offer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.

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<sup>2</sup>These nonsettlers are not parties in the instant U.S. action.

EPA) to conduct the remedy at the Site and negotiated the Remedial Action Consent Decree (“RA Decree”) providing for the cleanup of the Site.

Once the Work Group was formed, that group began the process of negotiating settlements with the remaining so-called “de minimis” parties. The Work Group devised a settlement formula for those parties for the purpose of reaching settlements with them for the claims of both the Work Group (who would be incurring the full cost of the remedy) and the United States for its response costs. That settlement formula was shared with the United States, which deemed it a fair and reasonable settlement approach for all such parties (except for certain municipal government parties who settled under the terms of the Municipal Consent Decree and a group of parties similarly situated by virtue of being tied to the Site through alleged transshipments from another site).<sup>3</sup> In particular, settlement amounts based on that same formula were offered to all the current nonsettlers in the private cost recovery action who qualified for “de minimis” settlements, but who have failed to reach settlements with the United States.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note, as well, that the United States did not “rubber-stamp” the findings of the Allocator with respect to these parties. Instead, it insisted that each party wanting to settle disclose the Allocator’s findings with respect solely to that party so that the United States could independently evaluate the merits of that party’s allocated share.

In short, the settlement process was a fair-minded one. All parties that were similarly situated were offered settlement on the same terms, and the settlement was substantively reasonable in that the settlement amounts were based principally upon an evaluation of the recommendations of an experienced neutral Allocator who conducted an extensive fact-finding process to develop his recommendations. The fairness and reasonableness of the settlements is perhaps best demonstrated, however, by the fact that the settlement offers made have been accepted by all but a handful of the more than 90 parties who participated in the ADR process.

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<sup>3</sup> In addition, certain “de minimis” parties settled on the basis of the results of the Preliminary Allocation Report.

<sup>4</sup> As with the “non-de minimis” nonsettlers referenced above, these “de minimis” nonsettlers are not parties to this action.

Put another way, the ADR process ordered by the Court achieved its purpose of avoiding protractive and expensive litigation not only with respect to the claims in the private cost recovery action in which ADR was ordered but with respect to the claims of the United States as well. See June 28, 2000 Status Report of Plaintiffs in Acme Wrecking; U.S. Memorandum at 22-24 (discussing uniform CERCLA case law favoring settlements to effectuate CERCLA's basic policy goals).

**II. THE REMEDIAL ACTION CONSENT DECREE CONTAINS NUMEROUS SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE THAT THE REMEDY WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN A TIMELY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY PROTECTIVE MANNER AND, ONCE IMPLEMENTED, WILL BE SUBJECT TO PERIODIC REVIEW TO ENSURE THAT IT REMAINS PROTECTIVE OF HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The United States has demonstrated through its motion to enter the consent decrees, the memorandum in support, and U.S. EPA's response to comments, that the RA Decree is protective of human health and the environment. In fact, only one commenter has alleged otherwise. The concerns of this commenter appear to be largely speculative in nature and have been thoroughly addressed by the Department of Justice and U.S. EPA in their papers. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the numerous safeguards in the RA Decree which provide U.S. EPA with significant authority to: 1) oversee the timely and proper implementation of the work to ensure that it is consistent with the Remedial Action required by the RA Decree; 2) periodically review the effectiveness of the Remedial Action to make sure it is protective of human health and the environment once the work has been completed; 3) require additional work if necessary; 4) take over and perform the work itself if U.S. EPA determines that the Work Group is not conducting it in accordance with the RA Decree; and, 5) reopen the terms of the RA Decree if previously unknown conditions or information indicate that the Remedial Action is not protective of human health and the environment. In addition to these safeguards, the RA Decree requires the Work Group to assist U.S. EPA in providing information to the community on the

progress of the work and further provides that the Court shall retain its jurisdiction through the duration of the decree.

Under the terms of the RA Decree, the Work Group must effectively complete the Remedial Action by September 30, 2001, in order to allow U.S. EPA to conduct its pre-final inspection. RA Decree ¶ 12(e).<sup>5</sup> During the course of the Remedial Action, the Work Group must submit detailed monthly progress reports to U.S. EPA and Ohio EPA describing the Group's efforts towards achieving compliance with the RA Decree. RA Decree, ¶ 40. Additionally, in the event that any change occurs in the schedule for implementing the Remedial Action, the Work Group must give U.S. EPA advance notice in order to allow it to adequately perform its oversight activities. RA Decree, ¶ 41. In the event of any unusual occurrence, such as the unanticipated release of a hazardous substance during the implementation of the remedy, the Work Group has additional reporting and response obligations that go above and beyond the normal work requirements of the RA Decree. RA Decree, ¶¶ 42 and 58. All of the reports and plans submitted by the Work Group during the performance of the work are subject to the review and approval of U.S. EPA in consultation with Ohio EPA. RA Decree, § XII. Finally, in order to deter unjustified delays in implementing the work, the RA Decree subjects the Work Group to daily, stipulated penalties of up to \$10,000 or daily statutory penalties of up to \$25,000 for failing to meet certain deadlines. RA Decree, § XXVI.

Moreover, at the conclusion of the Remedial Action, the Work Group must submit a certification to U.S. EPA, signed by a registered professional engineer, indicating that the Remedial Action has been implemented in accordance with the RA Decree. RA Decree, § XVI. Only after U.S. EPA reviews and approves that submission will it issue a certification to the Work Group indicating that the Remedial Action is complete. Thereafter, the Work Group has

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<sup>5</sup> The Work Group has indicated to the United States that it will need an extension of this date in the event that entry of the RA Decree does not occur by March 15, 2001.

ongoing operation and maintenance requirements, for up to 30 years, all of which will be overseen by U.S. EPA, in consultation with Ohio EPA, to ensure the long-term integrity of the remedy.

Numerous additional requirements of the RA Decree give U.S. EPA the authority to ensure that the remedy operates as it was intended. For example, pursuant to Section VII of the RA Decree, U.S. EPA, in consultation with Ohio EPA, will conduct reviews of the protectiveness of the Remedial Action every five years. The Work Group must assist U.S. EPA in conducting these reviews. In the event that U.S. EPA establishes as a result of these reviews that the Remedial Action is not protective of human health and the environment, it may select further response actions. RA Decree, ¶ 20. U.S. EPA then may, consistent with the reopener provisions of the RA Decree set forth in Section XXVII, require the Work Group to implement these additional response actions. RA Decree, ¶ 21.

In this case, the United States has determined that the remedy will be implemented properly by the Work Group. While it is very common for private parties to implement remedial actions, U.S. EPA does not simply trust any private party to implement such work unless it is confident that it can be done in accordance with the requirements of CERCLA. U.S. EPA's confidence has been earned by the Work Group here through the previously successful remedial efforts of members of the Work Group at the Site, the commitment of all of the Work Group members to the allocation process, the submission of a good faith offer to U.S. EPA, the negotiation of the RA Decree, and the Group's demonstrated commitment to work with community representatives to address their concerns. Nonetheless, in the highly unlikely event that the members of the Work Group fail to fulfill their joint and several obligations to implement the remedy, the United States has the clear authority under the RA Decree to take over the site work, complete the remedy, and seek its costs from these parties. RA Decree, ¶

126. Based on the commitments made by the Work Group to date and its working relationship with the U.S. EPA, the likelihood that the United States would have to exercise this authority is highly remote. Nevertheless, the RA Decree clearly provides the United States with this authority to protect the interests of the public. Finally, the consent decree also requires the Work Group to assist U.S. EPA with its community relations obligations and provides this Court with continuing jurisdiction in this matter. RA Decree, §§ XXXVI and XXXVIII.

Given all of these elements, the RA Decree provides numerous layers of significant safeguards to ensure that the Remedial Action is implemented in a timely and expeditious manner, and that the overall remedy remains protective of human health and the environment.

### **III. IN ORDER TO FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINAL REMEDY FOR THE SITE, THE RA DECREE SHOULD BE ENTERED PROMPTLY**

The United States has concluded that prompt implementation of the remedy set forth in the Remedial Action Consent Decree is in the public interest. That objective would obviously be furthered if construction of the entire remedy could be completed by the end of the calendar year, i.e., before the onset of winter conditions near the end of 2001, which would interrupt and delay completion of the construction until the spring of 2002. The Work Group believes that, barring extenuating circumstances and earlier winter conditions than normal, construction of the entire remedy should be possible in the year 2001 if the RA Decree is entered by March 15, 2001.

Consequently, the Work Group respectfully requests that the Court enter the RA Decree by that date.

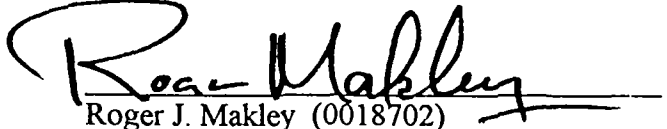
### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The United States has demonstrated that the RA Decree meets the requirements of Section 122 of CERCLA. Moreover, as discussed above, the RA Decree contains numerous and overlapping safeguards to ensure both that the remedy is implemented promptly and, once implemented, that it will remain protective of human health and the environment. Entry of both consent decrees will also resolve all claims of the United States in its complaint in this matter,

and resolve all but a handful of the claims in the private cost recovery action in Acme Wrecking. Prompt entry of the RA Decree will ensure expeditious implementation of the final remedy for the Site. Accordingly, and because the settlements embodied in the decrees are fair, reasonable, and consistent with the purposes of CERCLA, both decrees should be entered forthwith.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the

Work Group,

  
Roger J. Makley (0018702)

Trial Attorney


Coolidge, Wall, Womsley & Lombard

33 West First Street, Suite 600

Dayton, Ohio 45402-1289

Telephone: 937-223-8177

Telecopier: 937-223-6705

  
Karl S. Bourdeau

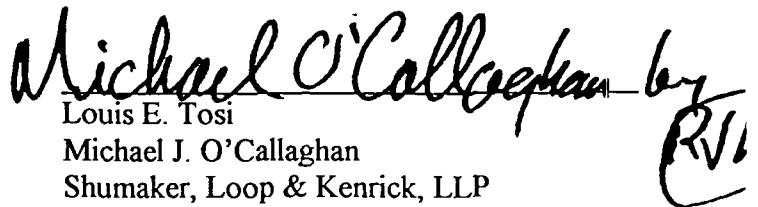
Beveridge & Diamond, P.C.

1350 I Street, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20005-3311

Telephone: 202-789-6000

Telecopier: 202-789-6190

  
Louis E. Tosi

Michael J. O'Callaghan

Shumaker, Loop & Kenrick, LLP

41 S. High Street

Suite 2210

Columbus, OH 43215

Telephone: 614-463-9441

Telecopier: 614-463-1108



## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true copy of the foregoing, Skinner Work Group Memorandum In Support Of United States' Motion To Enter Consent Decree, was served by regular U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2001 by Michael O'Callaghan from Columbus, Ohio.

Dustin Ordway  
Miller, Johnson, Snell & Cummiskey, P.L.C.  
250 Monroe Avenue  
Grand Rapids MI 49501-0306

Bonni Fine Kaufman  
Hale & Dorr, LLP  
(for American Premiere Underwriting  
& Chemical Leaman)  
The Willard Office Building  
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Jonathan R. Haden  
Lathrop & Gage L.C.  
(Allied Waste Industries-BFI)  
2345 Grand Blvd. Suite 2800  
Kansas City, MO 64108-2612

Russell S. Frye  
Collier, Shannon, Rill & Scott, PLLC  
(American Standard & Steelcraft)  
30050 K. Street, NW Suite 400  
Washington, D.C. 20007

A. Christian Worrell III  
Graydon, Head & Ritchey  
1900 Fifth Third Center  
511 Walnut Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
(The Andrew Jergins Company,  
The Cincinnati Enquirer, The City of Fairfield,  
Newberry Construction Company)

Kevin N. McMurray  
Frost & Jacobs, LLP  
(Avon Products)  
2500 PNC Center  
201 East Fifth Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-4182

Beth M. Ellis  
Michelin North American, Inc.  
(BF Goodrich Company)  
P.O. Box 19001  
Greenville, SC 29602

Anne H. Lewis  
Bayer Corporation (Mobay)  
100 Bayer Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15205-9741

David L. Bell  
BP Amoco/BP Exploration & Oil, Inc.  
200 East Randolph Drive  
Chicago, IL

Sharon Post  
Borden Chemical, Inc.  
180 East Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

C. Richard Spring  
Director of Environmental Affairs  
Borden, Inc.  
180 East Broad Street

Grace Healy  
Champion International Corporation  
One Champion Plaza  
Stamford, CT 06921

Columbus, Ohio 43215  
CSC The United States Corporation  
One Champion Plaza  
Stamford, CT 06921

John J. Finnigan, Jr., Senior Counsel  
The Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company  
139 East 4th Street  
25<sup>th</sup> Floor, Atrium II  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-0960

Stephen N. Haughey  
Frost & Jacobs, LLP  
201 East Fifth Street, Suite 2500  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Jeffrey S. Goldenberg  
Murdock & Goldenberg  
City of Silverton  
700 Walnut Street, Suite 400  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-2015

Karri K. Haffner  
Barrett & Weber  
(City of Reading)  
105 East Fourth Street, Suite 500  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Thomas A. Waldman  
Cytec Industries, Inc.  
5 Garrett Mt. Plaza  
W. Patterson, NJ 07424

Ross E. Austin  
DuPont Remington Arms  
1007 Market Street  
Wilmington, DE 19898

CT Corporation  
Elf Atochem North America, Inc.  
208 S. LaSalle Street  
Chicago, IL 60604

Timothy R. Evans  
(Elsa Skinner Morgan)  
315 S. Monument Avenue  
Hamilton, OH 45012

Ronald T. Allen  
Assistant General Counsel  
Georgia-Pacific  
133 Peachtree Street, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Gary Gengel  
(Georgia-Pacific)  
Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelley LLP  
3300 Plaza VII  
45 South Seventh Street  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

David M. Bullock  
(Johnston Coca-Cola)  
1200 First Union Tower  
150 Fourth Avenue North  
Nashville, TN 37219-2433

Betty Jean Bailey  
Environment Administrator  
Ludlow Corp. & Tyco International  
One Tyco Park  
Exeter, NH 03833

Ronald L. Andes  
Marathon Ashland Petroleum LLC  
539 South Main Street  
Findlay, OH 45840

Eric G. Johannessen  
Masonite Corporation  
6400 Poplar Avenue  
Memphis, TN 38197

David T. Morgan  
Mecco, Inc.  
P.O. Box 368  
Middletown, OH 45042

Jeffrey C. Wyant  
Morton International  
100 Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

J. Alan Mack  
Occidental Chemical Corporation  
5005 LBJ Freeway  
Dallas, TX 75244-6119

Siri S. Marshall  
Ralcorp Holdings, Inc.  
Number One General Mills Blvd.  
Minneapolis, MN 55426

Douglas L Hensley  
Keating, Muething & Klekamp, P.L.L.  
(Rumpke Entities)  
1400 Provident Tower  
One East Fourth Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Thomas J. Haines  
Sunco, Inc.  
1801 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

John MacDonald, Assistant Secretary  
Union Carbide Corporation  
39 Old Ridgebury Road  
Danbury, CT 06817

Stephen Axtell  
Thompson Hine & Flory LLP  
312 Walnut Street  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-4089  
W. Glenn Forrester, Vice President  
Merrell Pharmaceuticals, Inc.  
399 Interpace Parkway  
Parsippany, NJ 07054

Kevin J. Hopper  
MVM, Inc.  
7434 Jager Court  
Cincinnati, OH 45230

Jane C. McGregor, Senior Counsel  
Procter & Gamble Company  
One Procter & Gamble Plaza  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Audrey Friedel  
Rohmand Haas Company  
100 Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

G.A. Thompson  
Shell Oil Company  
910 Louisiana  
Houston, TX 77252-2463

R. Scott McCay  
Texaco, Inc.  
1111 Bagby  
Houston, TX 77002

Ava Harter  
Thompson, Hine & Flory LLP  
(United Water Waste Services, Inc.)  
3900 Key Tower  
127 Tower Square  
Cleveland, OH 44104

Stephen N. Haughey  
Frost & Jacobs, LLP  
(Village of Glendale)  
201 East Fifth Street, Suite 2500  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Wijdan Jreisat  
(Watson's/J & J Distributing Company  
C.M. Paula Company)  
255 East Fifth Street, Suite 2400  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Thomas A. Lorenzen  
Environmental Defense Section  
Environment and Natural Resources Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
P.O. Box 23986  
Washington, D.C. 20026-3986

(City of Blue Ash)  
Jeffery S. Goldenberg  
Murdock & Goldenberg  
700 Walnut Street, Suite 400  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-2011

(City of Deer Park)  
Jeffery S. Goldenberg  
Murdock & Goldenberg  
700 Walnut Street, Suite 400  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-2011

(City of Madeira)  
C.J. Schmidt  
Wood & Lamping  
600 Vine Street, Suite 2500  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

(City of Monroe)  
Stephen N. Haughey  
Frost & Jacobs  
201 East Fifth Street, Suite 2500  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

(City of Sharonville)  
Thomas T. Keating  
10900 Reading Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45241

(Village of Lincoln Heights)  
Matthew W. Fellerhoff  
Manley Burke & Cook  
225 W. Court Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Steve Oster  
Willkie, Farr & Gallagher  
Chemical Leaman Tank Lines  
Three Lafayette Centre  
1155 21<sup>st</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036-3384

Vincent B. Stamp  
Charles R. Dyas, Jr.  
Dinsmore & Shol  
(Formica Corporation  
Borden Chemical, Inc.)  
1900 Chemed Center  
255 E. Fifth Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Linda L. Bentley  
General Motors Corporation  
3044 West Grand Blvd.  
Room 12-149  
Detroit, MI 48202

Jodi L. Miner  
Terri A. Czajka  
Ice, Miller, Donaldson & Ryan  
(Glove Valve Corporation)  
One American Square  
Box 82001

Kenneth R. Arnold  
Henkel Corporation  
49 Valley Drive  
Furlong, PA 18925

Indianapolis, IN 46282-0002  
Terry W. Baer  
King Container Services, Inc.  
2020 Stapleton Court  
Cincinnati, OH 45240

Linda W. Tape  
Christopher N. Bolinger  
Joseph G. Nassif  
(Monsanto Company  
Solutia, Inc.)  
One Mercantile Center  
St. Louis, MO 63101-1693

Craig Melodia  
Regional Counsel, EPA Region V  
77 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Erin Isaacson  
General Counsel  
Velsicol Chemical Corporation  
10400 W. Higgins, Suite 600  
Rosemont, IL 60018

Steven D. Smith  
Project Manager  
Solutia Inc.  
(Monsanto Company)  
575 Maryville Centre Drive  
P.O. Box 66760  
St. Louis, MO 63141

Ronald J. Gizzi  
General Counsel  
Formica Corporation  
15 Independence Blvd.  
Warren, NJ 07059

CT Corporation System  
Ford Motor Company  
1300 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cleveland, OH 44114

Scott M. Slovin  
Schwartz, Manes & Ruby  
(King Wrecking Company, Inc.)  
2900 Carew Tower  
441 Vine Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-3090

Douglas B. Clark  
Foley & Lardner  
(Newell/Anchor Hocking)  
P.O. Box 1479  
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-1479

Sherry Estes  
Regional Counsel, EPA Region  
77 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

James C. Diggs  
Senior Vice President and  
General Counsel  
PPG Industries, Inc.  
One PPG Place  
Pittsburgh, PA 15272

Theresa L. Cerwin  
Authorized Agent  
Service of Process  
General Motors Corporation  
Legal Staff  
New Center One Bldg.  
3031 W. Grand Blvd.  
Detroit, MI 48202

CT Corporation  
The Dow Chemical Company  
30600 Telegraph Road  
Bingham Farms, MI 48025

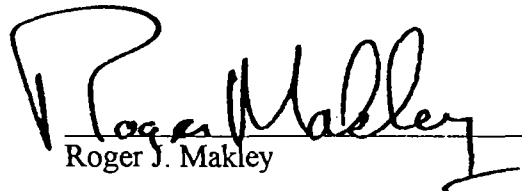
Roger Florio  
Counsel – Environmental Affairs  
GE Aircraft Engines  
1 Neumann Way, Mail Drop T- 165  
Evendale, OH 45215

Laura A. Ringenbach  
Taft, Stettinius & Hollister LLP  
(Dow & Morton)  
1800 Firstar Tower  
425 Walnut Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-3957

Drenaye Houston  
Senior Attorney  
Environmental Enforcement Section  
Environmental and Natural Resources Division  
United States Department of Justice  
P.O. Box 7611  
Washington, DC 20005-7611

Jo Lynn White  
Corporate Counsel  
BFI/Allied Waste  
Allied Waste Industries, Inc.  
15880 N. Greenway-Hyden Loop  
Suite 100  
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Gerald F. Kaminsky  
Assistant United States Attorney  
220 U.S.P.O. & Courthouse  
100 E. Fifth Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

  
Roger J. Makley

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO  
WESTERN DIVISION

FILED  
KENNETH J. MURPHY  
CLERK

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff

v

Civil: C-1-00-424

ELSA SKINNER MORGAN, et al,

Defendant

U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DIST OHIO  
WEST DIV CINCINNATI

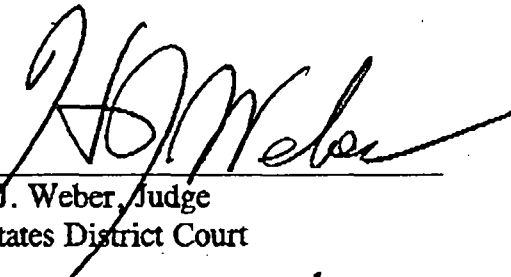
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ORDER

Parties are advised that the above styled case is SCHEDULED for a Hearing on Monday, April 2, 2001 at 10:00 a.m., in the Potter Stewart Courthouse, 100 East 5th Street, Courtroom 801, Cincinnati Ohio.

The Court at that time will consider Plaintiff's Motion for Leave to enter Consent Decree (#9). The Court hereby directs that the law office of Roger Makely, Esquire shall serve a copy of this Order to all interested parties and/or objectors.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

  
Herman J. Weber, Judge  
United States District Court

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO  
WESTERN DIVISION

FILED  
KENNETH J. MURPHY  
CLERK

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U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DIST OHIO  
WEST DIV CINCINNATI

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

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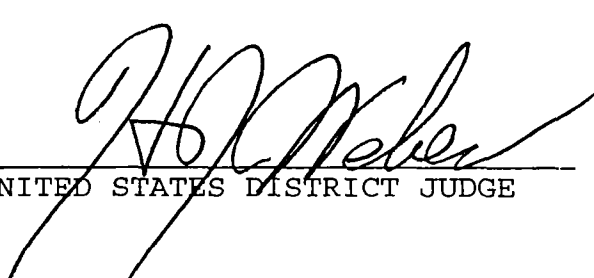
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Mag.	
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ORDER

The motion of Plaintiff, the United States of America, on behalf of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, to amend the complaint in this action pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15(a) was filed on January 18, 2001. The Court has reviewed the papers submitted and considered the arguments of counsel as well as the authorities cited.

IT IS ORDERED THAT the United States' Motion to Amend the Complaint is GRANTED.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE